REPORTS

The International Conference on Languages, E-Learning and Romanian Studies. The 6th Edition of the "Rumänska sektionens Konferens, Lunds Universitet"

The International Conference on Languages E-Learning and Romanian Studies took place between the 3rd and the 5th of June 2011 on the isle of Marstrand, in Sweden[1]. This conference, just like the other previous five in its row, was organized by Mrs Coralia Ditvall, Associate Professor at the Department of Romanian Studies within the Centre for Languages and Literature of the University of Lund, and at the Department of English, Germanic and Romance Studies of the University of Copenhagen. At both universities, Mrs Ditvall teaches, on BA level, the courses in Romanian language. It is noteworthy that this curriculum is the only one of its kind in the entire Scandinavian Peninsula.

This year's conference had a particular profile that can be clearly noticed when taking a look at the previously held ones. That aspect is largely due to an innovation brought by Mrs Ditvall in the process of teaching a foreign language. As early as 1998, Mrs Ditvall set the bases of the project *Language-studies online: Case study 'Romanian course-program at Lund University'* that aimed to teach a foreign language via internet. In 2005, „the full 'construction' of the whole university program in 'Romanian Studies' was completed, i.e. published on the internet-platform LUVIT (Lund University Virtual Interactive Tool)" and therefore, „all four university-levels run in parallel – both at full-time and at half-time, starting every term" –, in contrast to the years before 1998 when „Romanian was taught only on the beginner-level, every other/third year"[2]. Thus, due to this *e-learning*, else known as *distance learning,* method, the courses in Romanian became accessible to a broad audience (they actually address every person living in the Scandinavian Peninsula with an interest in Romanian language and/or culture, regardless of age, profession or country of origin), and not to the students registered with the universities in Lund and Copenhagen alone. The courses aim to teach Romanian as a *completely foreign language* and are entirely held online, on every study-level (including beginner-level). They offer the students remarkable flexibility when it comes to timing the level-ups, since each student is allowed to follow the study-levels at his/her own pace. Flexibility is, also, a keyword when taking exams is in order: indeed, such examinations can take place either at the universities in Lund or Copenhagen, or, more innovatively, at the international conferences held on the isle of Marstrand.

Since this project was a pioneer case-study in the teaching performed entirely via internet, the previous conferences focused mainly on Romanian studies. Thus, the first five editions (2002, 2005, 2006, 2007 and 2008) represented, on one hand, an event of major importance in the exchanges between Romanian and Scandinavian researchers and scholars. On the other hand, these conferences (mostly that of 2008) were thought to be a *complementary* event to the curricula in Romanian language at the universities in Lund and Copenhagen. The first conference in the row, which took place in 2002, was organized in two distinct sections: one for the public readings, and a second one dedicated to book presentations, defending Ph.D theses, presentation of student projects (including here BA dissertations and examining the students who had previously chosen the conference as a place of examination). The year 2008 came with elements of novelty in the structure of the conference: the number of participants increased and a new section was added, as well. This section,

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[1] *http://www.infomezzo.se/Marstrand/*

[2] *http://www.sol.lu.se/en/sol/staff/CoraliaDitvall/*

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named generically *Workshop*, was created to meet, in the first place, the more specialized interests of the students. The final structure of the conference was given in the year 2011: due to the fact that the scientific profile of Mrs Ditvall oriented the Department of Romanian Studies of the University of Lund toward e-learning education, the International Conference on Languages E-Learning and Romanian Studies that took place between the 3rd and the 5th of June 2011 on the isle of Marstrand was thought in such a manner that would encompass the Romanian studies and e-learning, as well. Mrs Ditvall herself, in the opening of the proceedings, stated that the e-learning remained a still unexplored arena in the teaching of a foreign language, and thus, the conference profile was extended to languages and literatures other than Romanian. The result was that the meeting of 2011 brought, along with the element of novelty represented by e-learning, a broader array of interests, varying from theoretic linguistics to literary analysis and from methodology of language-teaching to metaphor studies.

The proceedings were divided in three distinct sections, as follows: Language and Literature Studies, E-learning, and Romanian Studies. The Language and Literature Studies Section section was presided by Robin Wildt-Hansen, translator with the European Parliament in Luxembourg, Petra Bernardini of the University of Lund, and prof. Erling Strudsholm of the University of Copenhagen. Prof. Lena Dafgård of the University of Gothenburg, prof. Suzanne Schlyter of the University of Lund, and Marie Blomkvist (also, web-master of the conference) presided in E-learning section. The proceedings in Romanian Studies section were conducted by prof. Arne Halvorsen and by prof. Ingmar Söhrman of the University of Gothenburg. The common proceedings on the last day of the conference, dedicated to projects and student papers, were conducted by Mrs Arina Stoenescu of Stockholm.

The proceedings were opened on Friday, the 3rd of June, by Mrs. Coralia Ditvall in the warm and cosy environment provided by the City Hall on the Isle of Marstrand. The subsequent proceedings of the three sections took place in the austere, yet perfectly comfortable halls of the Marstrand Fortress.

In Language and Literature Studies section, Robin Wildt-Hansen opened the proceedings with a particularly vivid description of the formal process until becoming an official translator of the EU. Elena Faur of the Institute of Linguistics in Cluj-Napoca followed with a linguistic analysis of the metaphors for death in Emily Dickinson's poem *Because I Could Not Stop for Death*. After break, Bea Klüsener of the Catholic University of Eichstätt-Ingolstadt gave a lecture on the image of the antiheroic feminine figures in literature, by the title of *Sheridan LeFanu's Carmilla and Bram Stoker's vampire ladies as representations of Cesare Lombroso's donna delinquente*. Last speaker of the day in that section was Bogdan Harhătă of the Institute of Linguistics in Cluj-Napoca, with a paper on why collocations should find their place in Romanian dictionaries.

In E-learning section, prof. Adelina Sporea of the „Spiru Haret" University in Bucharest opened the proceedings with a paper targeting the e-learning platform for science education. Prof. Lena Dafgård followed describing how video applications can be used in teaching languages online in higher education. Arina Stoenescu closed the day with a paper by the title *Exploratory design: The Golden Age for Children, a Case-study*.

In Romanian Studies section, Albina Girfanova of St. Petersburg opened the proceedings by presenting some significant aspects of the history of Romanian language studies in Russia. Ioana Anghel and Nicolae Mocanu of the Institute of Linguistics in Cluj-Napoca followed with a glimpse into the past, giving a presentation of the correspondence between Romanian linguist Sextil Puşcariu and prof. Alf Lombard. After break, prof. Nikolay Sukhachev of the University of St. Petersburg gave a lecture on some linguistics observations on the figure of Călin in the poetry of M. Eminescu and in Romanian folklore, while Monica Timofte, lecturer of Romanian language at the University of Lund, closed the day with a paper on double expression of direct object and indirect object of Romanian verbs.

On the second day of the conference, the proceedings in Language and Literature Studies section were opened by Petra Bernardini of the University of Lund, with a technical lecture on the cross-linguistic influence from French in the production of object clitics in young L2 learners of Italian. Ann Arika Lindvall followed, with an interesting and heart-felt report on the linguistic situation on the Solomon Islands. After break, prof. Shirley Hanshaw of the University of Mississippi gave a magisterial lecture on the image of Sweden, seen as symbolic North in the African American

narratives inspired/themed on the Vietnam War. Soichi Kozai of Osaka followed with a paper on seemingly exceptional forms of politeness in Japanese, while prof. Viggo Jensen of the University of Copenhagen closed the day with a lecture on the fate of Eugenio Coseriu's theories on variational linguistics among Scandinavian linguists.

In E-learning section, the proceedings were opened by prof. Ousseynou Traore of „William Paterson" University in New Jersey, with a lecture entitled *From Bilali to Solomon: Autobiography, Family History, Ancestral Genealogy and the Structure of Ethnic Memory in Morrison's Song of Solomon*. Prof. Ligia Florea of the „Babeș – Bolyai" University in Cluj-Napoca followed with a paper that proposes some criteria for an operational typology of the study of print media genera. Mrs Nancy Funk, owner of art gallery in Pennsylvania gave a lecture on art appreciation over internet, while Jngela Johansson of the University of Lund closed the day with a paper on literary didactics for an internet-based distance course in Spanish.

The second day proceedings in Romanian Studies section were opened by Diego Muñoz-Carrobles, who presented some of the difficulties encountered when translating Romanian poetry into Spanish. Prof. Ingmar Söhrman of the University of Gothenburg gave a lecture on balkanisms in modern Romanian language. Monica Feraru of the Institute for Computer Science in Iași followed with a paper on formant values in French and Romanian seen contrastively. Rafaella Morosoli, translator and interpreter, presented a paper on translation and interpretation for a practitioner's point of view.

The evening of the second day was entirely dedicated to the lectures given by the keynote speakers. Her Excellency, the Minister-counsellor Florina Sava of the Romanian Embassy in Stockholm spoke on the role of the diplomatic missions of Romanian in promoting Romanian language and civilization abroad, and announced the opening of the Alf Lombard hall in the seat of the Romanian Embassy in Stockholm. A particularly interesting and actual lecture was given by prof. Jens Allwood, director of the Interdisciplinary Cognitive Science and Communication Centre SCCIIL at the University of Gothenburg, who spoke of the challenges for language technology in preserving less-resourced languages and cultures. The lecture given here comes as a natural result of prof. Alwood's preoccupation in the investigation of multi-modal communication and cultural variation in communication. On the other hand, the lecture reflects, as well, the directions followed by the SCCIIL [*Semantics, Cognition, Communication, Information, Interaction, Language*] research projects tutored by the University of Gothenburg.

The third day of the conference was an opportunity for students, professors and researchers to meet, since it was dedicated to student papers and project presentations.

Beside the strict scientific interest, the International Conference on Languages E-Learning and Romanian Studies organized by Mrs Coralia Ditvall remained, just like the other five that preceded it, an opportunity to recreate a smaller Romania on Scandinavian shores, namely on the isle of Marstrand; the cultural activities integrated to the programme stand test to it. On the first evening, Alyssa Grossman presented the film *Lumina amintirii* [*In the Light of Memory*], a documentary staged entirely in Bucharest, a few years ago, on the remembrance of the communist past of Romania. Each evening, the soirées were spiced up by the presence of a group of musicians (Rebecca Billström, Marie Blomkvist, Mats Gustafsson, Jan Khouback, Josefine Liftig, and Andreas Rudenå), who, on the first two evenings, played traditional Romanian songs. The group, named suggestively, Calabalâc, became an already homely presence with each edition of the conference, and in 2011, due to the large international participation, dedicated the final evening to interpreting the most iconic songs of the participants' nations.

Thus, the conference became, besides a place for the meeting of ideas, also, a place of heart, where, our Mrs Ditvall, besides being an organizer, proved to be a wonderful host, true to ancient Romanian traditions.

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